Overview of an Infocom Star Trek Game
(hereinafter referred to as "Star Trek")

"Star Trek" will be a strategy game based upon the television series of the same name. "Star Trek" will include space exploration and combat with hostile aliens (though players may be on "peaceful missions," as on the TV show, and be penalized for indiscriminate warfare).

Graphics will be used both to facilitate strategic gameplay (e.g., seeing where your starship is relative to a starbase) and to make the game more attractive and visually appealing. Music and/or sound effects will also be used to make the game appealing and to give players an authentic "Star Trek" experience.

"Star Trek" can be played either by one person (playing "against" the computer) or by multiple players on separate computers (playing against each other, or teamed up against the computer). The player will be Captain James T. Kirk of the starship Enterprise (or, in a multiplayer game, the commanding officer of a similar vessel).

Game commands will be issued by interacting with the officers and men of the starship's crew. This will naturally include the well-known crew members: Mr. Spock, Uhura, Sulu, "Scotty," Chekov, etc. The player will "talk" to these characters by typing natural-English-like sentences on the computer keyboard ("Mr. Sulu, set a course for star system 30," "Uhura, get me starfleet command," "Chekov, fire the torpedo," etc.), and the crew members will respond appropriately and in character. It will be possible to relieve the player of "strategic tedium" by giving the crewmembers standing orders ("Chekov, shields to configuration alpha"). In the multiplayer mode, the player may also send messages to other (human) players.

Successful game play, including battle sequences, will not require hand/eye coordination, but rather strategically commanding the crew to use limited resources. The play of the game will be nearly identical from computer to computer, though the graphics presentation may vary from machine to machine.

"Star Trek" will be available initially for the IBM PC.

The following issues remain unresolved relative to "Star Trek":

1) Can we license the "Star Trek" name under reasonable terms?

2) Can we sufficiently differentiate ourselves from any present and future S & S "Star Trek" games?

3) What is the real market for multiplayer games?

4) How important is "real" graphics to the potential success of the game?

There are a number of approaches to graphics and each requires some tradeoffs.

APPROACH 1: Use "character" graphics

APPROACH 2: Write a machine specific game that is a great graphics game.

APPROACH 3: Modify EZIP and the development system to incorporate machine specific graphics as part of a generally machine independent game.

APPROACH 4: Reinvent DIP but do it right this time.

The advantage of approach 1 is that we could write the game without a large amount of development system/EZIP modification. The disadvantage approach 1 is that the game would be less sexy especially on machines like the ST and the Amiga. Approach 2 would definitely result in a sexy game but it would not exploit the strengths of Infocom. Approaches 3 and 4 both have the advantage of producing a sexy game with the Infocom flavor of interaction. The disadvantage of these approaches is the time and resources required to develop the product. Out of approaches 3 and 4, 3 is more attractive in that it would not require solving some difficult fundamental research problems.